



The 
Nation's
Report Card
U.S. History 2006

NATIONAL ASSESSMENT OF EDUCATIONAL PROGRESS AT GRADES 4, 8, AND 12



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May 2007

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What is The Nation's Report Card™?

The Nation's Report Card™ informs the public about the academic achievement of elementary and secondary students in the United States. Report cards communicate the findings of the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP), a continuing and nationally representative measure of achievement in various subjects over time.

For over three decades, NAEP assessments have been conducted periodically in reading, mathematics, science, writing, U.S. history, civics, geography, and other subjects. By making objective information available on student performance at the national, state, and local levels, NAEP is an integral part of our nation's evaluation of the condition and progress of education. Only information related to academic achievement and relevant variables is collected. The privacy of individual students is protected.

NAEP is a congressionally mandated project of the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) within the Institute of Education Sciences of the U.S. Department of Education. The Commissioner of Education Statistics is responsible for carrying out the NAEP project. The National Assessment Governing Board oversees and sets policy for NAEP.



Executive Summary

The National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) U.S. history assessment evaluates students' understanding of the development of America's democratic institutions and ideals. Students demonstrated their knowledge of democracy, culture, technological and economic change, and America's changing world role. A nationally representative sample of 29,000 students at grades 4, 8, and 12 was assessed in 2006. This report compares 2006 student performance to similar assessments conducted in 1994 and 2001.

America's twelfth-, eighth-, and especially fourth-graders know more U.S. history now than in the past according to the 2006 NAEP assessment.

The performance of twelfth-graders, tomorrow's adult citizens, improved over the last dozen years with increases distributed across the entire range of performance. A higher percentage of twelfth-graders performed at or above the *Basic* level in 2006 than in both previous assessment years. Scores increased over the past five years in all four themes measured by the assessment.

Eighth-graders' knowledge of U.S. history has also improved since 1994. Eighth-grade scores were higher at all levels of performance. The percentage of eighth-graders at or above *Proficient* increased from 14 percent in 1994 to 17 percent in 2006.

What students know about U.S. history

Fourth-graders

- 66% understood the symbolism of the Statue of Liberty
- 35% explained how two inventions changed life in the U.S.
- 24% explained why people settled on the western frontier

Eighth-graders

- 64% identified an impact of the cotton gin
- 43% explained goals of the Martin Luther King, Jr., march
- 1% explained how the fall of the Berlin Wall affected foreign policy

Twelfth-graders

- 67% identified important Great Society idea
- 36% identified immigration pattern and explained its causes
- 14% explained a reason for involvement in the Korean War

	Grade 4		Grade 8		Grade 12	
	Compared to 1994	Compared to 2001	Compared to 1994	Compared to 2001	Compared to 1994	Compared to 2001
Overall	↑	↑	↑	↑	↑	↑
White	↑	↑	↑	↑	↑	↑
Black	↑	↔	↑	↔	↑	↔
Hispanic	↑	↑	↑	↑	↑	↔
Asian/ Pacific Islander	↔	↔	↔	↔	↑	↔
American Indian/ Alaska Native	‡	‡	↔	↔	↔	↔
Gaps						
White – Black	↓	↔	↔	↔	↔	↔
White – Hispanic	↓	↔	↔	↔	↔	↔

- ↑ Indicates the score was higher or the gap increased in 2006.
- ↓ Indicates the score was lower or the gap decreased in 2006.
- ↔ Indicates there was no significant change in the score or the gap in 2006.
- ‡ Reporting standards not met.

Improvements in fourth-grade performance, with higher average scores in 2006 than in 1994, were evident for a number of student groups. The greatest improvement was found for the lowest-performing fourth-graders who gained 19 points. Seventy percent of fourth-graders performed at or above *Basic* compared to 64 percent in 1994.

As shown in the chart above, White, Black, and Hispanic students at all three grades and Asian/Pacific Islander students at grade 12 showed improvements when compared to 1994. American Indian/Alaska Native students did not improve.



An Introduction to the U.S. History Assessment

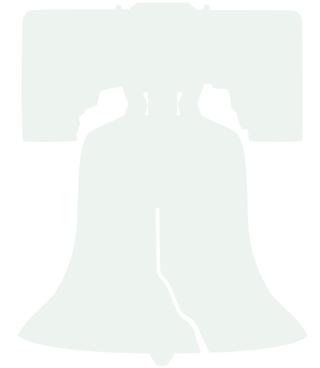
The framework, which serves as the blueprint for the NAEP U.S. history assessment, was developed by the National Assessment Governing Board. With the goals that students should know the specific facts of American history, be able to evaluate historical evidence, and understand change and continuity over time, the U.S. history assessment is organized around three dimensions:

- **THEMES OF U.S. HISTORY**
- **PERIODS OF U.S. HISTORY**
- **WAYS OF KNOWING AND THINKING ABOUT U.S. HISTORY**

THEMES OF U.S. HISTORY

Four historical themes make up the core structure of the framework and are intended to cover all major branches of historical study. The themes also define the subscales for reporting the U.S. history assessment results:

- > **Democracy** – Change and Continuity in American Democracy: Ideas, Institutions, Events, Key Figures, and Controversies
- > **Culture** – The Gathering and Interactions of Peoples, Cultures, and Ideas
- > **Technology** – Economic and Technological Changes and Their Relationship to Society, Ideas, and the Environment
- > **World Role** – The Changing Role of America in the World



CHANGES IN THE FRAMEWORK

U.S. history was assessed by NAEP in 1986 and 1988, but only the results in 1994, 2001, and 2006 are discussed in this report. A new U.S. history framework was developed for 1994, which provided specifications for both the 1994 and 2001 assessments. In 2003, the Governing Board revised the framework for the 2006 U.S. history assessment. The relatively minor revisions in 2003 ensured that NAEP could maintain the U.S. history trend line of student achievement for grades 4, 8, and 12 in 1994, 2001, and 2006.





PERIODS OF U.S. HISTORY

The assessment divides the major eras of U.S. history into eight chronological periods:

- > Beginnings to 1607
- > Colonization, Settlement, and Communities (1607–1763)
- > The Revolution and the New Nation (1763–1815)
- > Expansion and Reform (1801–1861)
- > Crisis of the Union: Civil War and Reconstruction (1850–1877)
- > The Development of Modern America (1865–1920)
- > Modern America and the World Wars (1914–1945)
- > Contemporary America (1945 to the present)



WAYS OF KNOWING AND THINKING ABOUT U.S. HISTORY

Two ways of understanding U.S. history guided question development:

Historical knowledge and perspective

- > Sequencing events and recognizing multiple perspectives
- > Seeing an era or movement through the eyes of different groups
- > Developing a general conceptualization of U.S. history
- > Knowing and understanding people, events, concepts, and historical sources

Historical analysis and interpretation

- > Explaining issues
- > Identifying historical patterns
- > Establishing cause-and-effect relationships
- > Finding value statements
- > Establishing significance
- > Applying historical knowledge
- > Weighing evidence to draw sound conclusions
- > Making defensible generalizations
- > Rendering insightful accounts of the past

ASSESSMENT DESIGN

To cover a greater range of content, each student took just a portion of the assessment, answering two 25-minute sections or one 50-minute section of multiple-choice and constructed-response questions. Results were combined to produce an average score for the nation overall and by various student groups (for example, gender or race/ethnicity).

More detailed information about the assessment can be found in the 2006 NAEP U.S. history framework on the Governing Board website at http://www.nagb.org/frameworks/history_06.pdf.



Reporting NAEP Results

The students selected to take the NAEP assessment represent hundreds of other students like themselves across the U.S. The NAEP data can only be obtained with the cooperation of schools, teachers, and students nationwide. By participating, they play an important role in improving education in the country.

Nationally representative samples of schools and students at grades 4, 8, and 12 participated in the 2006 NAEP U.S. history assessment. The overall estimates include performance of all fourth-, eighth-, and twelfth-graders in public schools, private schools, Bureau of Indian Affairs schools, and Department of Defense schools. The number of schools and students who participated in the 2006 NAEP U.S. history assessment is presented in table 1.

Table 1. **Number of participating schools and students in NAEP U.S. history assessment, by grade: 2006**

Grade	Schools	Students
Grade 4	330	6,500
Grade 8	450	11,400
Grade 12	570	11,300

NOTE: The numbers of schools are rounded to the nearest ten, and the numbers of students are rounded to the nearest hundred.

SOURCE: U.S. Department of Education, Institute of Education Sciences, National Center for Education Statistics, National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP), 2006 U.S. History Assessment.

SCALE SCORES

NAEP U.S. history results are reported on a 0–500 scale, overall and for each of the four themes. In addition, results are reported at five percentiles (10th, 25th, 50th, 75th, and 90th) to show the scores of lower-, middle-, and higher-performing students.

Because scales were set separately for each theme, score comparisons should not be made from one theme to another.

A common scale metric across all three grades was used for the U.S. history scores. However, comparisons across grades, at the subscale level and for the composite scale, are not appropriate because the scale was not based on a combined analysis of all three grades.

ACHIEVEMENT LEVELS

Achievement levels reflect what students should know and be able to do. The Governing Board sets specific achievement levels for each subject area and grade, based on recommendations from policymakers, educators, and members of the general public. To provide a context for interpreting student performance, NAEP results are reported as percentages of students performing at or above the *Basic* and *Proficient* levels and at the *Advanced* level. As provided by law, NCES, upon review of congressionally mandated evaluations of NAEP, has determined that achievement levels are to be used on a trial basis and should be interpreted with caution. The NAEP achievement levels have been widely used by national and state officials.

NAEP ACHIEVEMENT LEVELS

Basic denotes partial mastery of the knowledge and skills that are fundamental for proficient work at a given grade.

Proficient represents solid academic performance. Students reaching this level have demonstrated competency over challenging subject matter.

Advanced signifies superior performance for a given grade.

ITEM MAPS

As shown in the Assessment Content section, the item maps are another way to interpret the scale scores and achievement-level results for each grade. The item maps also show student performance on items at different levels on the scale.

ACCOMMODATIONS IN NAEP

Prior to 2001, no testing accommodations were provided in the NAEP U.S. history assessment. This resulted in the exclusion of some students (for example, students with disabilities or English language learners) who could not fairly and accurately demonstrate their abilities without modified test administration procedures. In 2001, administration procedures were introduced allowing certain accommodations, such as extra testing time or individual rather than group administration, for students requiring such accommodations to participate. Note that most figures in this report show two data points in 2001—one permitting and one not permitting accommodations. Both 2001 samples are presented in this report, but comparisons between 2001 and 2006 are based on the accommodated samples of both years.

INTERPRETING RESULTS

This report discusses findings based on a statistical significance at the .05 level with appropriate adjustments for multiple comparisons. In the tables and charts, the symbol (*) indicates that scores or percentages in 2006 are significantly different from the comparable scores or percentages in prior assessment years.

NAEP results present student performance by different demographic characteristics (for example, gender, race/ethnicity, or student-reported highest level of parents' education). These results should not be used to establish a cause-and-effect relationship between background characteristics and achievement. Educational and socioeconomic factors may affect student performance in complex ways. Not all of the data for results discussed in the text are presented in corresponding tables or graphics, but can be found on the NAEP website at <http://nces.ed.gov/nationsreportcard/nde>. For additional information, see the Technical Notes on page 30 or visit <http://nationsreportcard.gov>.





U.S. History Knowledge Improves at All Three Grades

Results from the 2006 NAEP assessment in U.S. history show overall improvement in student performance in comparison to previous assessment years. A closer look at results for students performing at different achievement levels also shows increases over the past five years in percentages of students performing at the *Basic* level or above, but no significant change in the percentages performing at the *Proficient* level or above.

Fourth-grade lowest-performing students make largest gains

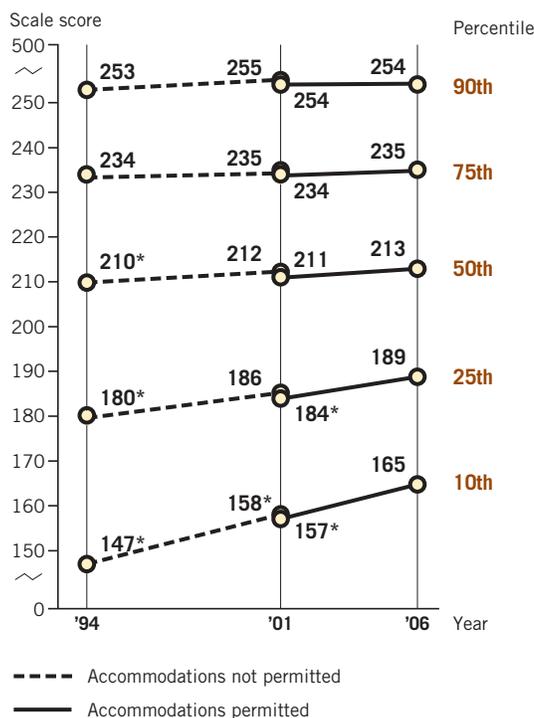
Fourth-graders' knowledge of U.S. history has improved over the past dozen years. The average score in 2006 was higher than in either previous assessment year (figure 1).

This overall improvement was largely driven by gains for lower-performing students. Scores for lower-performing students reached their highest level in 2006 including a 19-point¹ increase at the 10th percentile in comparison to 1994 (figure 2). Scores for students at the 75th and 90th percentiles were not significantly changed since the first assessment over a decade ago.

Gains by lower-performing students were also reflected in achievement-level results. The percentage of fourth-graders performing at or above the *Basic* level increased from 64 percent in 1994 to 70 percent in 2006 (figure 3). However, there was no significant change in the percentage of students at or above the *Proficient* level.

¹ The score point gain is based on the difference of the unrounded scores from the two years.

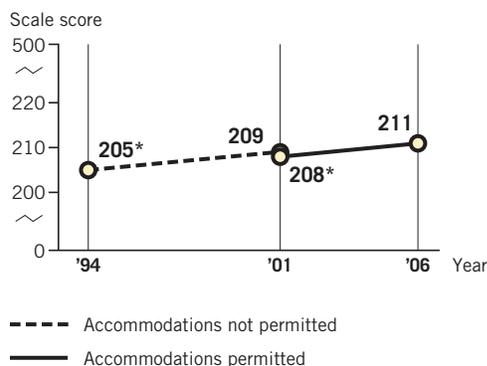
Figure 2. Trend in fourth-grade NAEP U.S. history percentile scores



* Significantly different ($p < .05$) from 2006.

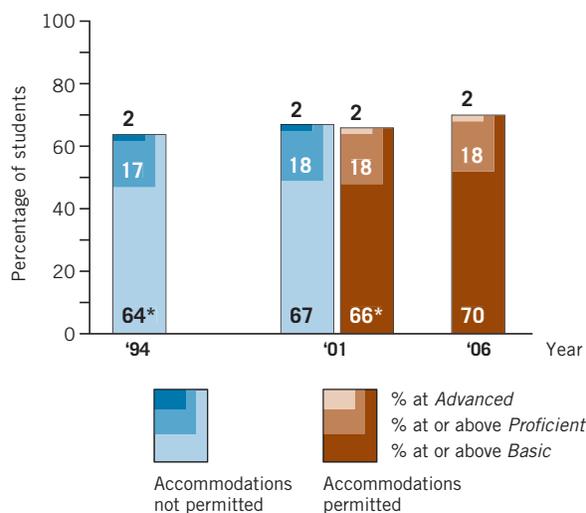
SOURCE: U.S. Department of Education, Institute of Education Sciences, National Center for Education Statistics, National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP), 1994, 2001, and 2006 U.S. History Assessments.

Figure 1. Trend in fourth-grade NAEP U.S. history average scores



* Significantly different ($p < .05$) from 2006.

Figure 3. Trend in fourth-grade NAEP U.S. history achievement-level performance



* Significantly different ($p < .05$) from 2006.



Eighth-graders performing at or above *Basic* increases

Similar to the results for grade 4, eighth-graders demonstrated a greater knowledge of U.S. history. The average score was higher in 2006 than in both 1994 and 2001 (figure 4).

Increases can be seen at all levels of performance compared with 1994 (figure 5). While lower- and middle-performing students also showed improvement between 2001 and 2006, there was essentially no change for higher-performing students.

The achievement-level results also showed improvement. A higher percentage of eighth-graders performed at or above the *Basic* level in 2006 than in both previous assessment years (figure 6). While the percentage of students at or above *Proficient* in 2006 was higher than in 1994, it was not significantly different from 2001.

Figure 4. Trend in eighth-grade NAEP U.S. history average scores

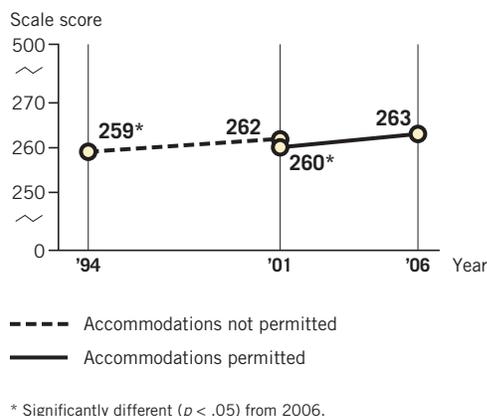


Figure 5. Trend in eighth-grade NAEP U.S. history percentile scores

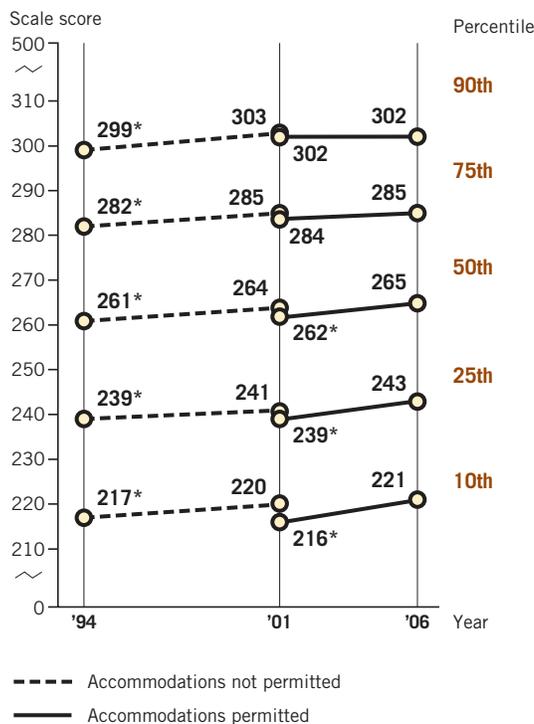
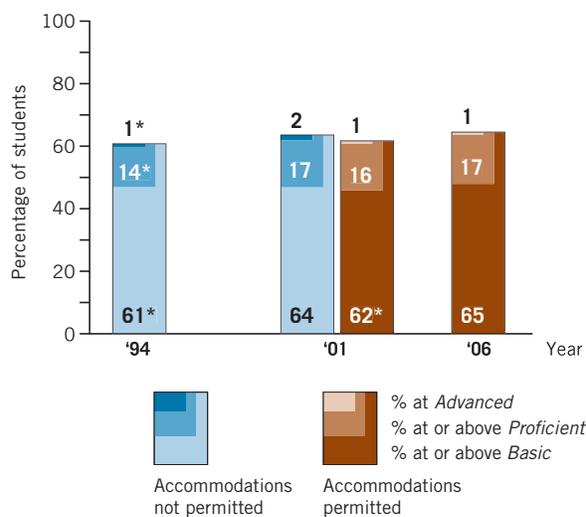


Figure 6. Trend in eighth-grade NAEP U.S. history achievement-level performance



NOTE: The percentage at *Advanced* in 2006 (1.16) was higher than in 1994 (0.74) but not significantly different from 2001 (1.28).

SOURCE: U.S. Department of Education, Institute of Education Sciences, National Center for Education Statistics, National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP), 1994, 2001, and 2006 U.S. History Assessments.



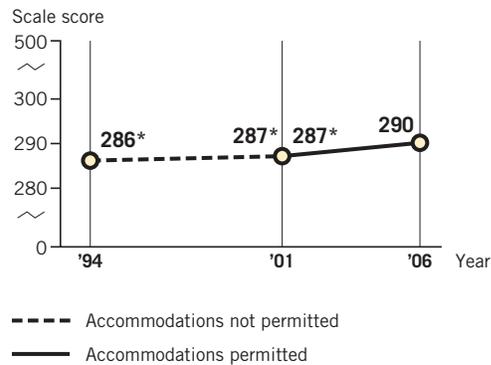
Twelfth-graders' knowledge of U.S. history increases

Twelfth-graders' average score was higher in 2006 than in either previous assessment year (figure 7). Most of the gains seen for twelfth-graders occurred over the last five years.

Scores for all percentiles increased over the last dozen years, and scores for all but the highest-performing students increased from 2001 to 2006 (figure 8).

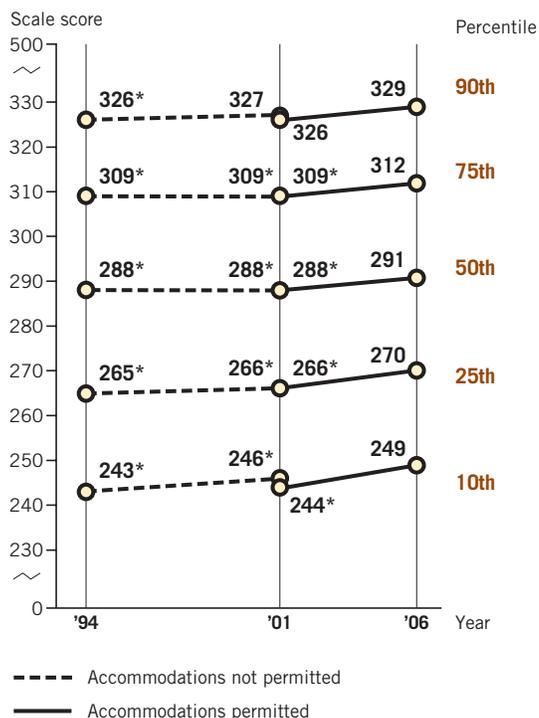
A higher percentage of twelfth-graders performed at or above the *Basic* level in 2006 than in previous assessment years (figure 9). The percentage of students at or above *Proficient* also increased from 1994 to 2006.

Figure 7. Trend in twelfth-grade NAEP U.S. history average scores



* Significantly different ($p < .05$) from 2006.

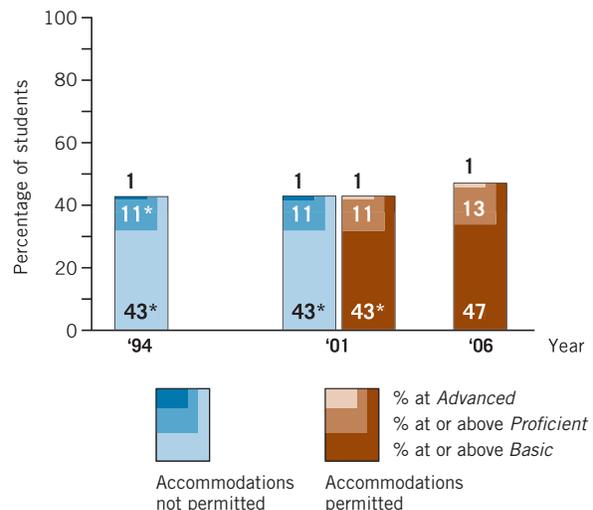
Figure 8. Trend in twelfth-grade NAEP U.S. history percentile scores



* Significantly different ($p < .05$) from 2006.

SOURCE: U.S. Department of Education, Institute of Education Sciences, National Center for Education Statistics, National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP), 1994, 2001, and 2006 U.S. History Assessments.

Figure 9. Trend in twelfth-grade NAEP U.S. history achievement-level performance



* Significantly different ($p < .05$) from 2006.

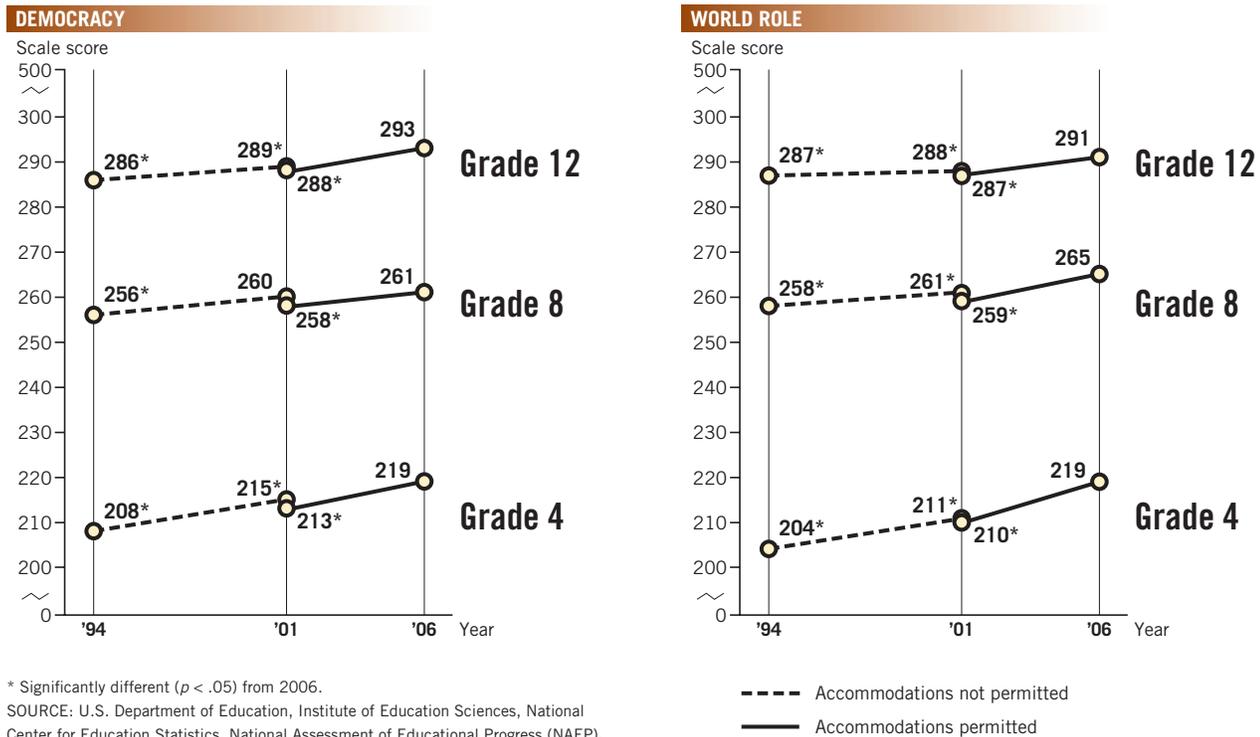


Improvement at all three grades in Democracy and World Role

Fourth-, eighth-, and twelfth-graders all showed improved performance in both the Democracy and World Role themes.

All three grades showed increases in the average scores for both the Democracy and World Role themes in 2006 as compared to 1994 and 2001 (figure 10).

Figure 10. Trend in NAEP U.S. history average scores, by grade and Democracy and World Role themes in U.S. history



Themes of U.S. History

Democracy questions assess students' understanding of American political democracy traced from colonial times to the present, including basic principles developed through the American Revolution, the U.S. Constitution, the Civil War, and the struggles over slavery and civil rights.

World Role questions assess students' understanding of America's role in foreign affairs and participation in world and regional wars, as well as the influences of geography, economic interests, and democratic ideals of the U.S. and other nations.

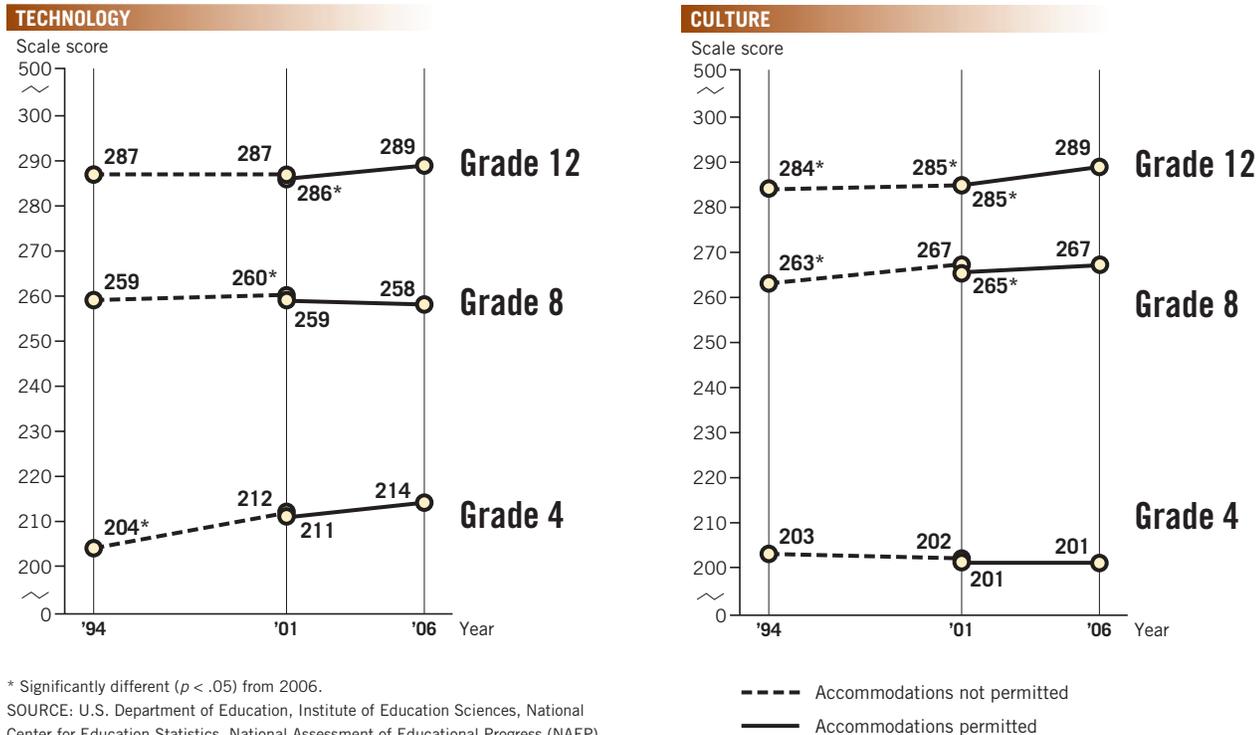


Gains mixed in Technology and Culture

Gains in the Technology and Culture themes varied by grade. While the average score for the Technology theme was higher in 2006 than in 1994 at grade 4, there were no significant differences over the same period at grades 8 and 12 (figure 11). At grade 12,

however, the average score in Technology was higher in 2006 than in 2001. There was no significant change in the score for the Culture theme at grade 4, but students at grades 8 and 12 made gains compared to both 1994 and 2001.

Figure 11. Trend in NAEP U.S. history average scores, by grade and Technology and Culture themes in U.S. history



Themes of U.S. History

Technological and economic change questions assess students' understanding of the changes in the United States, transformed from a rural frontier economy to an industrial superpower, including the impact of science and technology on society, the influence of geography, and the development of business and urbanization.

Culture questions address topics about the gathering of people and cultures from many countries, races, and religious traditions that have contributed to the American heritage and American society.



Performance Increases for Most Student Groups

The pattern of overall improvement in students' performance in U.S. history at all three grades was also seen for most student groups. Changes in score gaps between the student groups, however, did not reveal a consistent picture.

White, Black, and Hispanic students make gains

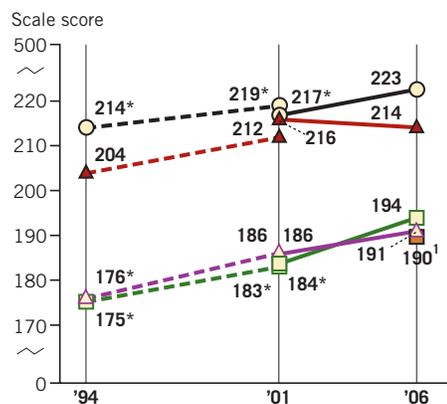
The overall improvement at all three grades was not found for every student group. White, Black, and Hispanic students scored higher in 2006 than in 1994 at all three grades (figure 12). However, between 2001 and 2006 there were no significant changes in average scores for Black students in any of the three grades, or for Hispanic students at grade 12. The average score for Asian/Pacific Islander students at grade 12

increased in comparison to 1994, but showed no significant change since 2001.

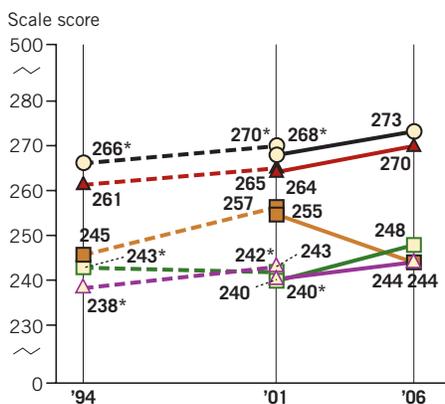
The improvement made by lower-performing fourth-graders overall was also seen for the racial/ethnic student groups. Although not shown here, scores for White, Black, and Hispanic fourth-graders at the 10th percentile increased 20, 29, and 36 points, respectively, from 1994 to 2006.

Figure 12. **Trend in NAEP U.S. history average scores, by grade and race/ethnicity**

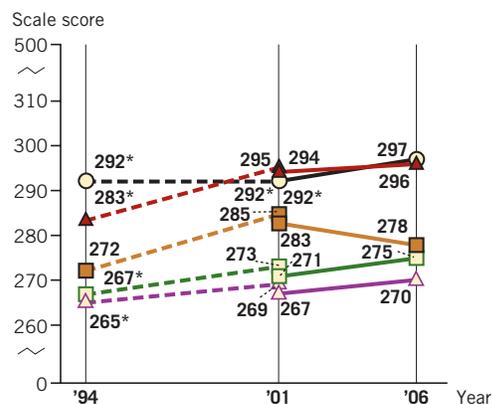
Grade 4



Grade 8



Grade 12



* Significantly different ($p < .05$) from 2006.

¹ Sample sizes were insufficient to permit reliable estimates for American Indian/Alaska Native fourth-graders in 1994 and 2001.

NOTE: Black includes African American, Hispanic includes Latino, and Pacific Islander includes Native Hawaiian. Race categories exclude Hispanic origin.

SOURCE: U.S. Department of Education, Institute of Education Sciences, National Center for Education Statistics, National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP), 1994, 2001, and 2006 U.S. History Assessments.

--- Accommodations not permitted

— Accommodations permitted

○ White

△ Black

□ Hispanic

▲ Asian/Pacific Islander

■ American Indian/Alaska Native



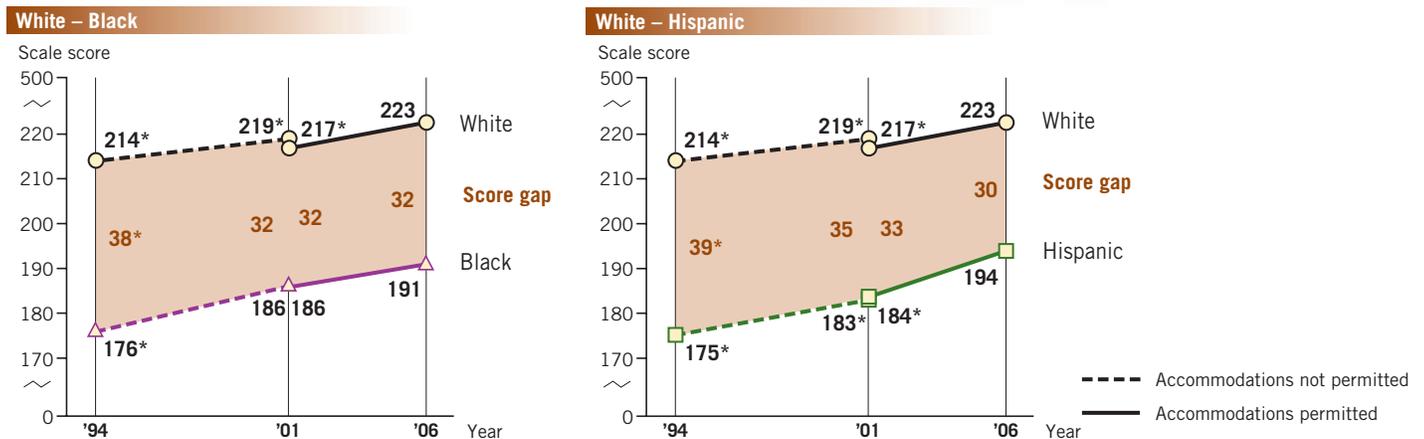
Gaps narrow at grade 4

The gains made between 1994 and 2006 by Black and Hispanic fourth-graders contributed to a narrowing of the gaps with their White peers. The White-Black gap narrowed by 6 points, and the White-Hispanic gap narrowed by 10 points during this period (figure 13).

While White, Black, and Hispanic students have made improvements, at grades 8 and 12 the gaps were not significantly changed over the last 12 years (table 2).



Figure 13. Trend in fourth-grade White – Black and White – Hispanic average scores and score gaps in NAEP U.S. history



* Significantly different ($p < .05$) from 2006.

NOTE: Black includes African American, and Hispanic includes Latino. Race categories exclude Hispanic origin. Score gaps are calculated based on differences between unrounded average scores.

Table 2. Average scores and score gaps in NAEP U.S. history, by grade and race/ethnicity: 1994, 2001, and 2006

	Scale score			Score gap with White students		
	1994	2001	2006	1994	2001	2006
Grade 8						
White	266*	268*	273	†	†	†
Black	238*	240	244	28	28	29
Hispanic	243*	240*	248	23	28	25
	Scale score			Score gap with White students		
Grade 12	1994	2001	2006	1994	2001	2006
White	292*	292*	297	†	†	†
Black	265*	267	270	27	24	27
Hispanic	267*	271	275	25	21	22

† Not applicable.

* Significantly different ($p < .05$) from 2006.

NOTE: Scores in 2001 are based on the accommodated sample. Black includes African American, and Hispanic includes Latino. Race categories exclude Hispanic origin. Score gaps are calculated based on differences between unrounded average scores.

SOURCE: U.S. Department of Education, Institute of Education Sciences, National Center for Education Statistics, National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP), 1994, 2001, and 2006 U.S. History Assessments.

Males outperform females at upper grades

The trend in student progress varied slightly by gender. At grades 4 and 8, both groups demonstrated increased U.S. history knowledge compared with the first assessment year, and male students also improved since the more recent assessment in 2001. At grade 12, both male and female students showed improvement compared with both previous assessment years.

Male students scored higher on average than female students at grades 8 and 12 in 2006. The gap at grade 8 was larger in 2006 than in 1994 (figure 14) although both groups scored higher. Male students also scored higher than their female counterparts in World Role at grades 4 and 8, and in Democracy, Technology, and World Role at grade 12 (table 3).

Figure 14. Trend in NAEP U.S. history average scores and score gaps, by grade and gender

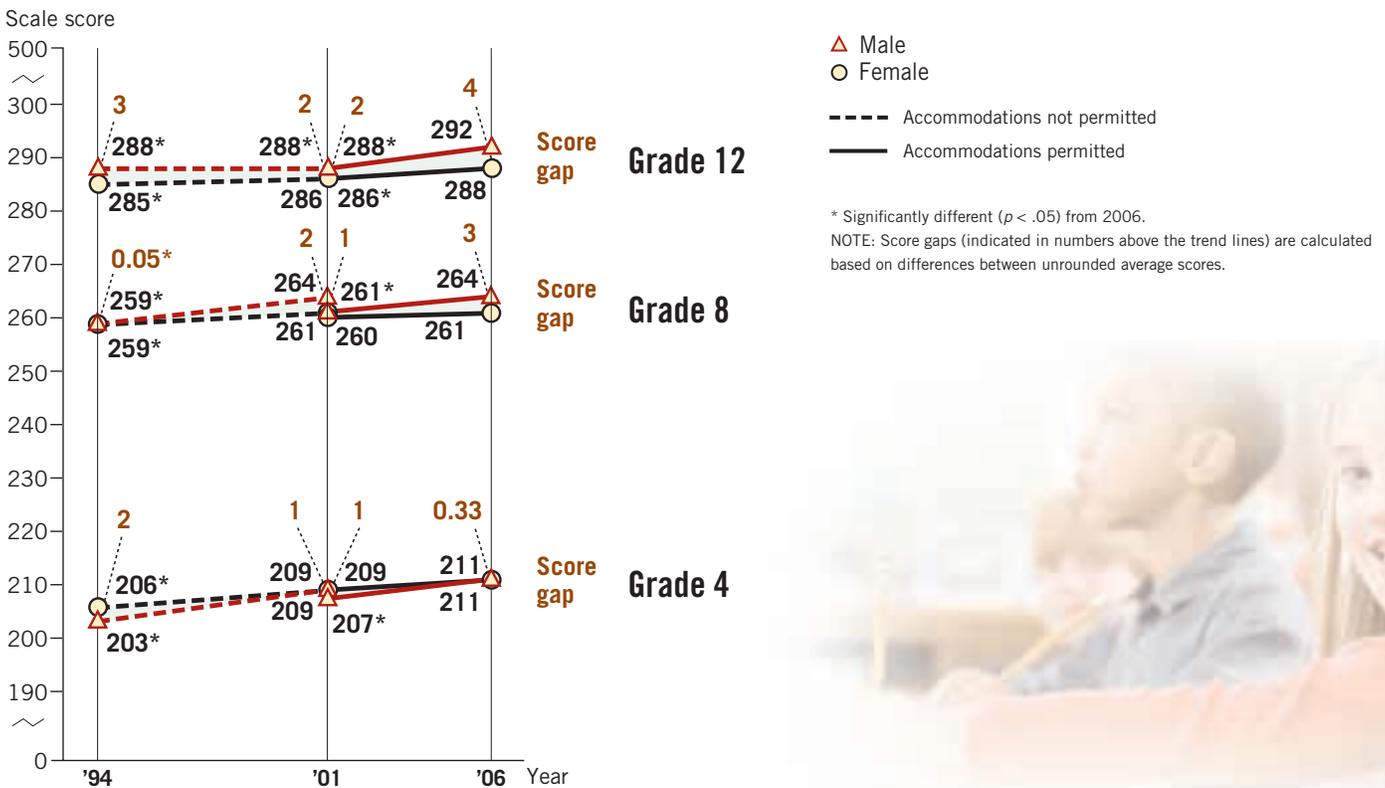


Table 3. Average scores for themes of NAEP U.S. history, by gender and grade: 2006

Grade	Democracy		World Role		Technology		Culture	
	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female
Grade 4	220	218	222*	217	214	213	199	202
Grade 8	262	260	270*	259	259	258	267	267
Grade 12	295*	291	296*	286	290*	287	288	289

* Significantly different ($p < .05$). Male students scored higher on average than female students.

SOURCE: U.S. Department of Education, Institute of Education Sciences, National Center for Education Statistics, National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP), 1994, 2001, and 2006 U.S. History Assessments.

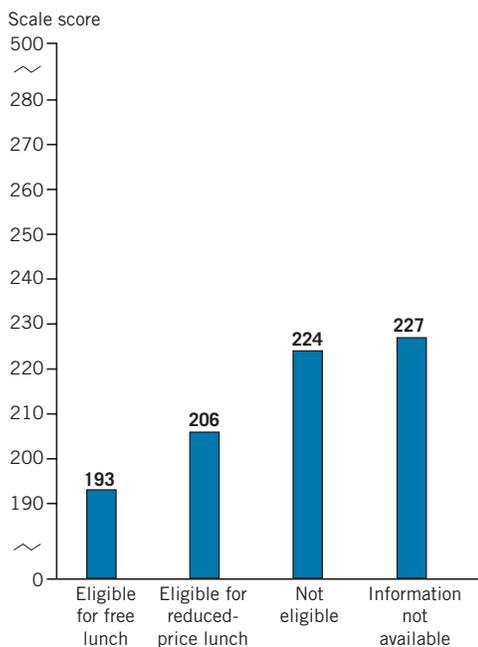
Knowledge of U.S. history differs by income levels

Students from lower-income families (those eligible for either free or reduced-price school lunch) scored lower on average than those from higher-income families. At both grades 4 and 8, students eligible for free lunch scored lower than students eligible for

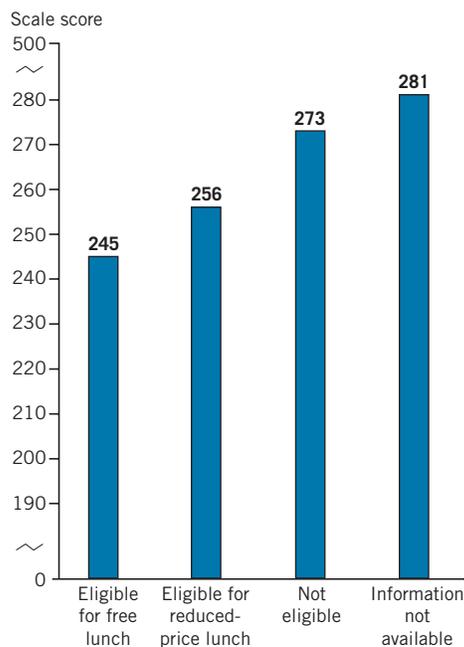
reduced-price lunch (figure 15). The score gaps between students in the lowest income level (eligible for free lunch) and those in the highest level (not eligible) were 31 points at grade 4 and 28 points at grade 8.

Figure 15. **Average scores in NAEP U.S. history, by grade and eligibility for National School Lunch Program: 2006**

Grade 4



Grade 8



The table below shows the percentages of fourth- and eighth-graders in the population who were eligible for the National School Lunch Program in 2006. Information on students' eligibility was not available for 7 percent of fourth-graders and 6 percent of eighth-graders.

Table 4. **Percentage of students assessed in NAEP U.S. history, by grade and eligibility for National School Lunch Program: 2006**

Eligibility status	Grade 4	Grade 8
Eligible for free lunch	37	32
Eligible for reduced-price lunch	8	7
Not eligible	48	55
Information not available	7	6

NOTE: Detail may not sum to totals because of rounding.
 SOURCE: U.S. Department of Education, Institute of Education Sciences, National Center for Education Statistics, National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP), 2006 U.S. History Assessment.



Knowledge of U.S. history varies by parent education

Students reporting higher levels of parental education scored higher on the U.S. history assessment. At grade 8, only students who reported that at least one parent graduated from college showed improvement over the past dozen years (figure 16). At grade 12, students reporting the lowest and highest levels of parental education showed improvement over the same period. Students reporting the middle levels of parental education performed better compared to five years ago.

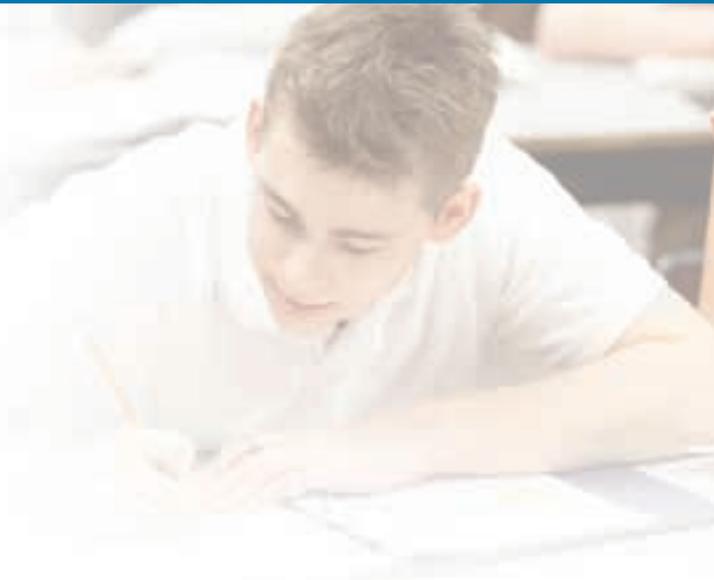
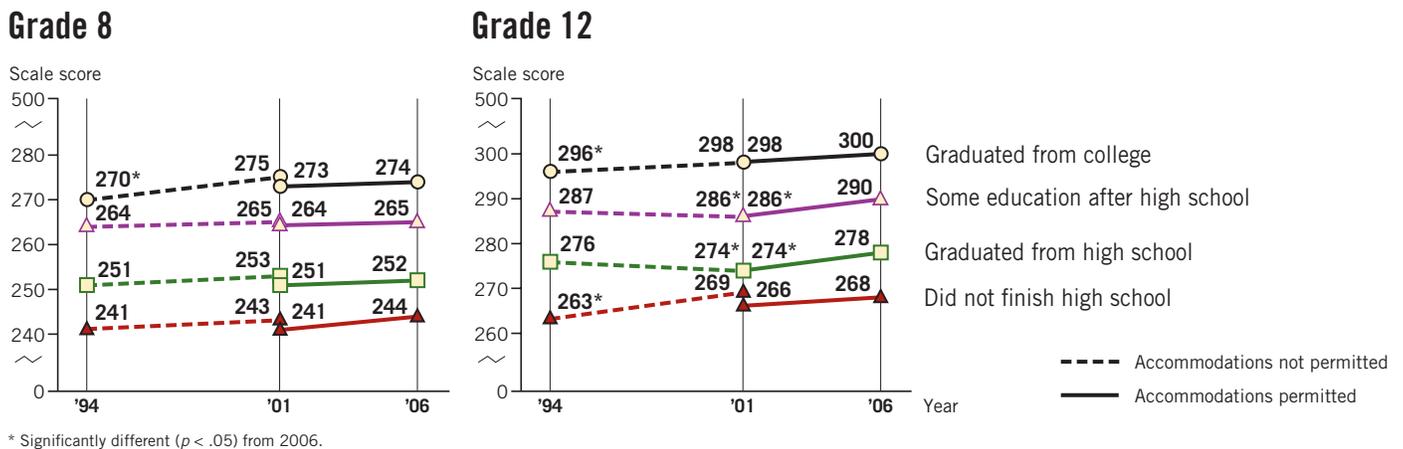


Figure 16. Trend in NAEP U.S. history average scores, by grade and parental education



The percentage of students at grades 8 and 12 reporting at least one parent graduated from college increased in 2006 compared to 1994.

Table 5. Percentage of students assessed in NAEP U.S. history, by grade and parental education: 1994, 2001, and 2006

Parental education level	Grade 8			Grade 12		
	1994	2001	2006	1994	2001	2006
Did not finish high school	7	8	8	7	7	8
Graduated from high school	23*	19	19	20	19	18
Some education after high school	19	18	18	25*	24	23
Graduated from college	42*	46	46	45*	46	49
Unknown	9	10	10	3	3	2

* Significantly different ($p < .05$) from 2006.

NOTE: Parental education levels are based on student-reported information. Percentages in 2001 are based on the accommodated sample. Information on parental education was not collected at grade 4 in 2006. Detail may not sum to totals because of rounding.

SOURCE: U.S. Department of Education, Institute of Education Sciences, National Center for Education Statistics, National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP), 1994, 2001, and 2006 U.S. History Assessments.